

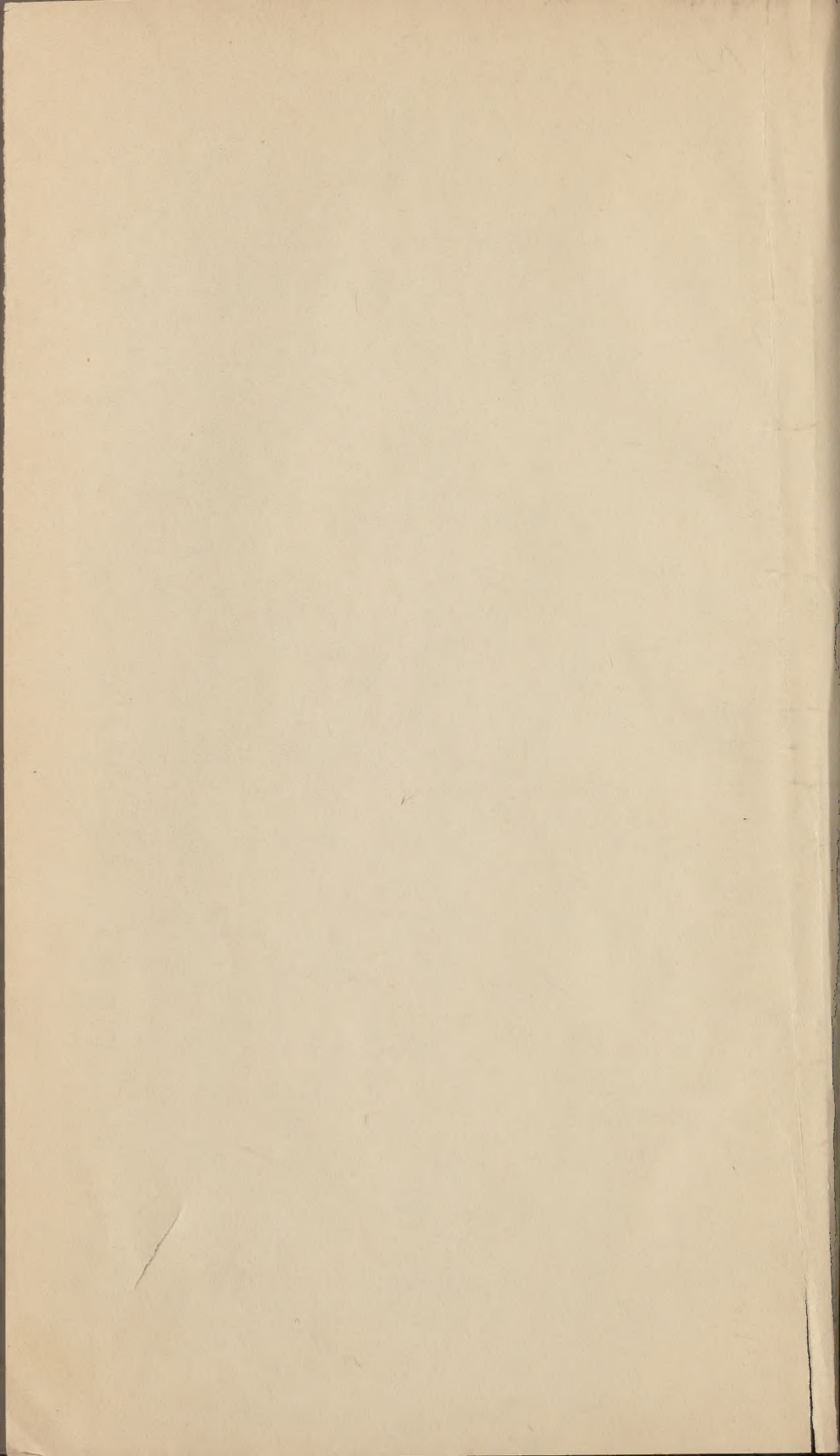
Imprisonment And Suffering
Of Robert Fuller

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AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
IMPRISONMENT
AND
SUFFERINGS
OF
ROBERT FULLER.

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AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
IMPRISONMENT
AND
SUFFERINGS
OF
ROBERT FULLER,
OF CAMBRIDGE.

Who while peaceably and quietly and rationally in possession of his own house, was seized and detained in the M'Lean Asylum for the Insane, at Charlestown, Mass. 65 days, from June 24th, to August 28th, 1832. Together with some remarks on that Institution.

"Offences must needs come, but woe unto the man by whom they come."

BOSTON:
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1833.

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TO THE PUBLIC.

I AM happy to say, as St Paul said to King Agrippa, that I can answer for myself.—I make the following narration not from feelings of malice or enmity, but from a sense of duty, which I owe to myself, my family and friends. I have been wronged, and I should think myself almost destitute of the feelings of humanity, did I not expose these wrongs, and use my feeble strength in awakening the public to the evils that exist. When one has been falsely accused, imprisoned, and persecuted nearly unto death, it is both his right and duty to make such an exposition of the whole affair as will tend to prevent its recurrence. The mariner, who should discover rocks and shoals, which he had narrowly escaped, and to which others would be exposed, would be regarded as a monster, did he not give information, and warn all who should go that way to avoid them. I sound the alarm not so much for my own good as for others. What has been done cannot be undone. The injuries I have received cannot be atoned for. No matter what acknowledgments may be made ; no matter what offerings of sympathy may be tendered ; no matter what acts of kindness are performed—all cannot blot from my memory the sufferings I endured, nor draw the mantle of oblivion over the injustice, cruelty, folly and madness of my *professed* friends. I am aware that the Institution, where I was imprisoned, is a popular one, and that any remarks derogatory to it will be in opposition to the received opinion,

yet relying upon the truth of my statements, and strengthened by my sense of duty to the public, I have no fears in declaring, that however benevolent and worthy may have been its original design, yet under its present administration, it is a reproach to the community.

I came to Cambridge in the Spring of 1815, when I was twenty years old. I first entered into the employ of Mr Ed. T. Hastings, a grocer in this place, with whom I remained about one year. I then engaged myself to Mr Francis Wyman, a dealer in iron, with whom I remained till the Spring of 1818, when I commenced business for myself in the brick store I now occupy ; during all which period, I have been engaged in the business of trading in iron and steel. My family consists of my wife, whom I married in 1819, and four children.

About the first of June, 1832, I purchased a lot of land of the town of Cambridge, on which I intended to build a house. It was then late in the season for building, and fearing that I should not get it done in a proper time, I made myself very busy in planning my house, and making a contract for building it, which I at length completed with Mr Nathaniel Hammond of Boston, about the 14th of June.

During the same week, several persons called on me for the purpose of requesting an examination into the conduct of Mr William Henshaw, a teacher in one of the public schools, whom they charged with having abused several of his pupils. I was one of the General School Committee. Another gentleman of the prudential committee with myself at their request, entered upon an examination of the truth of the charges, and after a full investigation of

the same, we dismissed Mr Henshaw. He appealed to the General School Committee, which on the following Monday, without a thorough examination of the facts, and contrary to all precedent, reversed our decision, and reinstated Mr Henshaw. This gave me some trouble insomuch as I thought our decision treated lightly, and was well satisfied that Mr Henshaw had denied facts which were true.

On Friday, the 15th of June, we heard that the cholera was in Montreal. This news, as is well known, produced a great excitement in the whole community. It appeared there with uncommon malignity, and spread with great rapidity. Its appearance among us was daily expected. For several days, it was the all-absorbing topic of conversation; all were making preparations either to flee from it or to meet it. I partook of the general excitement, and this with other cares and business gave me great anxiety.

Sunday, June 17th, I rode to Newton—attended meeting in the forenoon, and was much interested in the exercises. The afternoon I spent at Mr Bixby's at the Upper Falls—returned home about sundown, and rested well that night.

Monday, June 18th, I attended to the business of the school committee, as I have before stated, was engaged beside in my usual business—in the afternoon, I rode to Fresh Pond.

Tuesday, June 19th, I took an active part with other gentlemen of the town in making preparations for the cholera—in searching out and removing nuisances—in cleansing the streets, &c. By my exertions, in this and other business, I became very much fatigued.

Wednesday, June 20th, I rode to Newton with

my wife—stopped at the Spring Hotel three or four hours—had a consultation with John Clark, Esq. about the character of Mr. Henshaw as a school-master, which satisfied me that my opinion of him was correct—spent the afternoon at Mr Bixby's—talked considerably of the cholera—went to Boston with Mr Bixby that night—called at the Tremont House to see Mr Eaton, conversed with him on business and the cholera—afterwards went home and rested tolerably well.

Thursday, June 21st. Breakfasted and attended to my ordinary business—about 9 o'clock, started for Newton with Mr Bixby—stopped at the Spring hotel three or four hours—head ached very badly ; got much fatigued and sunburnt—used camphor profusely on my head—laid down and rested an hour or two, and felt much better ; afterwards rode to Newton—returned the same evening with my wife ; did not rest so well that night.

Friday, June 22d. After breakfast, rode to Fresh Pond—stopped at old Cambridge, and took a warm bath; then returned home—felt quite unwell, and called in Doct. Chaplin, who gave me a cathartic—kept my chamber all that afternoon and night; the medicine relieved me, and I slept well after 12 o'clock that night.

Saturday, June 23d. I rose in the morning about 5 o'clock, and after breakfast had three private attachments put on real estate to secure some debts in the country ; soon ascertained after I had gone to my store, that a draft from Nathan Harkness, of Leicester, had been presented the day before, and returned for non-acceptance. As I had previously given special orders to be informed of its presentation, I felt much displeased ; I immediately hurried to Boston, found the draft and accepted it and thinking

that the price of iron would fall in the city on account of the cholera excitement, I supposed I could make a good speculation by purchasing a large quantity and carrying it to Cambridge. I therefore called on Eaton at the Tremont House, and proposed to purchase his stock. He agreed to meet me on 'change at 9 o'clock. In order to pay for the iron, which I proposed to purchase, I went to the Eagle Bank, and left with the cashier, Mr John J. Fiske, notes to the amount of about ten thousand dollars to be discounted. I also applied to the cashier of the American Bank for a loan of two thousand dollars on my stocks, which was refused—I remained on 'change four or five hours—conversed with the dealers in iron about the price of that article—told them if the cholera came to Boston, it would be lower. I at length purchased of Mr Isaac Clapp, 58 tons of old sable iron. I remained longer on 'change than I intended, waiting for Mr Eaton, to whom I had several days before agreed to loan \$1000. About 1 o'clock, I went into the Eagle Bank, and asked Mr Fisk if my notes were discounted. He told me they were not. I asked him to give them to me. This he declined doing—Mr Benj. Thompson and Mr Titus Wells were both present. I then demanded them, and had some warm talk on the subject. I asked for an explanation of this conduct. Many excuses were made, and at length I was told that the Directors wanted all the money they had to lend. I hope that my notes were not needed to sustain their credit; and at any rate, I regretted exceedingly that they should detain them in such a dishonorable manner. Just before 2 o'clock, Mr Eaton came in and told me he did not want the \$1000, I had agreed to loan him. I then

returned to Cambridge, leaving my notes in the Eagle Bank, and much vexed with the course that had been pursued. I asked one of my clerks why he did not inform me that Mr Harkness' draft was presented for acceptance. He gave me no reason but expressed his regret, I was willing to forgive him. I asked the other the same question. He denied any knowledge of it; this I knew to be false, and it led to some hard words with him. This afternoon I went again to Boston with Mr. Valentine, at his request and partly on his business, did several errands—retured through Charlestown—called at the office of the Register of Deeds, and left a deed to be put on record. In the evening, I settled some affairs with Mr Valentine, and attended to my usual business—In the course of the evening, I had a slight skirmish with some truly Pharisaical persons on religion, and became considerably excited by the controversy—I retired to bed about 10 o'clock, and slept well till morning.

Sunday, June 24th. After a very comfortable night's rest, I rose nearly restored and took a good breakfast, I became convinced that the iron dealers held the prices too high to give me any chance to speculate. The purchase I made of Mr Clapp did not appear to me to afford much chance for profit, and the difficulties that I had had at the Eagle bank the day before, together with my other business, induced me to believe that that speculation was not much of an object. I therefore resolved to abandon it, if I could honorably. I therefore rode to Dorchester for the purpose of seeing Mr Clapp early in the morning before he had informed his principals of the sale, as he did not call on me the previous afternoon as I expected. I did not tell any one at Cam-

bridge the object of my visit ; I saw Mr. Clapp, told him my object, and offered to pay him all damages that arose from a relinquishment of the bargain for the iron. He informed me that as I had been to him a good customer, he did not wish to hold me to the bargain, and appeared to be perfectly willing to give it up. I had considerable conversation with Mr Clapp about the value of iron. We at length concluded, that if the purchasers would keep away, the iron dealers in Boston would be compelled to fall from their present prices. I told Mr Clapp I would not go to Boston for a week, and gave him an order to Mr John J. Fiske to keep the notes which he had detained from me, till I called for them. I left Dorchester at about 10 o'clock—stopped at Mr Taft's about 2 hours—took a good dinner of fish, and rested myself. I then called at the Tremont House to inform Mr Eaton of my arrangements, but did not find him—I returned home about noon—put up my horse, and went into my house. My wife asked me if I was going to meeting—I told her I should not, but intended to stay at home and rest. I retired to my chamber and slept about two hours, when I was awakened from my sweet repose on my own pillow.

I have been thus particular in describing my engagements, and the state of my health during this and several previous days—because I subsequently found to my sorrow, that my appearance and movements during this time had excited suspicions of my sanity and led to my imprisonment and sufferings.—The secrecy in regard to my speculation, which it was necessary to preserve, increased this suspicion—I am free to acknowledge, that in my hurry in business, I had been under some excitement: that I might

have made during that time intemperate, and unguarded expressions : that to persons unacquainted with my business and objects, my course of conduct might have appeared strange ; but I do aver before high heaven that I have a distinct recollection of my conduct all that time—that at no period of my life was I more capable of doing business ;—that what business I did transact, has ever since been regarded by me with approbation, and that I am now sensible, I could have adopted no better course ; that at the time of my seizure and imprisonment, I was perfectly rational and needed nothing but rest on my own pillow, and that I should have been restored immediately, had I not been made a victim by the exaggerated fears, excited passions, and distorted vision of my neighbours. I do not impute to them motives of malice ; I know not what were their motives ; but I am willing to submit the decision to an impartial public, whether taking into consideration all the circumstances of the case, their conduct towards me was not ill-advised, rash, foolish, unjust and cruel ; whether by infringing upon my rights, and inflicting on me a lasting injury, they did not act the part of indiscreet and meddlesome men.

Soon after I had been awakened, as I have before stated, I rose from bed,—felt considerably refreshed by sleep—went down stairs and seated myself in my rocking chair in my setting room. There I entered into conversation with my wife and her mother. I thought myself safe, and was happy at the idea of being in the midst of my own family, blessed with their kindness and enjoying their confidence. Little did I think that these happy visions were so soon to vanish ! Little did I suppose that a conspiracy was

forming without, that would so soon darken my prospects, and turn my cup of joy into sorrow ! Little did I anticipate, that I was so soon to be taken a prisoner in my own house, carried away, and confined within the walls of a dark and gloomy cell, where were none to cheer me in my solitude, and comfort me in my distress ! Yet this soon proved to be reality. In the midst of this pleasant conversation, I was surprised by the entrance of Mr. Luke Hemmenway, Col. John Tarbell, Mr. Elijah F. Valentine, Maj. A. Edwards, and Doct. John C. Hayden. They seated themselves about me, and after a few minutes conversation respecting their families, &c. Mr. Hemmenway remarked that my friends at Boston wished me to see Doct. Walker. I told him that I had no occasion to see Doct. Walker, and that I had taken good care of myself, and was getting along very well. Doct. Hayden then urged me to see Doct. Walker, and in the course of his conversation, used some language, that appeared to me improper and unbecoming a gentleman. Excited by a momentary passion, I rose from my chair, stepped towards Doct. Hayden, and requested him to leave my house. This was a signal for the attack. Mr. Hemmenway seized me around my body ; Doct. Hayden took hold of my collar, at the same time saying I could not frighten him, and Col. Tarbell seized my right arm. Here I was held firmly by three men. I had no knowledge of their design, and of course felt alarmed. I entreated them to let me alone.—They soon placed me on the sofa, and let go of me. I then resumed my chair. I soon found myself forsaken by all my friends, and at the mercy of these excited, and almost infuriated men. They again began to urge me to

see Doct. Walker. I told them I had no occasion to see him, but if it would satisfy them, he might come and see me. Accordingly Doct. Hayden went for him: they soon came to my house. At this time the scene was truly awful and to me appalling. I have no doubt, there were fifty people besides several carriages about my house: Doct. Walker seated himself by me and felt of my pulse. The scene through which I had just passed had thrown me into great agitation, and my pulse beat rapidly. Doct. Walker invited me to ride with him; I told him I would go to Fresh Pond: this he seemed to decline. I soon found that a carriage was brought to the gate, and I began to suspect that I should be carried away by force. I requested Capt. Haynes to call in Doct. Chaplin, who could inform them as to my health—how I had rested when he was with me, and to persuade them to let me remain at home. While he was gone, I went into my chamber, and there I found my wife and children in tears: the scene almost overcame me: I no longer had any power to resist. That moment I shall never forget: my cup of sorrow was filled; my heart fainted; I could hardly contain myself, I could then have truly spoken those memorable words of the Saviour, Father, let this cup pass from me.

When I had in some degree recovered from the effects of this scene, I renewed my entreaties for permission to stay in my own house. I proposed at this time to go to my chamber, and if it would be any satisfaction to them, two, or even a greater number of men might be placed in my chamber with me, till they were satisfied. I was willing that any precaution should be used at my own house, which to them should seem meet. But they were inexorable; to the Hospital go I must. I had no alternative: submis-

sion appeared to me preferable to being bound and forced away. I obtained permission to ride in a chaise with Doct. Chaplin. We were followed by a barouch, in which were Messrs E. T. Hastings, E. F. Valentine, and Col. Tarbell who rode in triumph after their innocent victim. The Hospital is about two miles from my house. We soon arrived there, and I was conducted without much ceremony to a south east corner room in the north wing, where I could see the light of heaven only through iron grates. Here I was locked up alone, and left to meditate on the thrilling scene I had left. I could think of nothing but my wife and children: I left them in tears, and I knew not whether it might not be their lot soon to share a like fate with me. My unpleasant reveries were at length broken by a person, who brought me some tea. Soon after a Mr. Davis by order of Doct. Walker brought me two pills. I told him I did not need them. He urged me to take them, and having already learned that resistance was vain, I put them into my mouth and pretended to swallow them, but spit them both out. He afterwards told me that he thought they had a good effect. Finding myself imprisoned, and that there was no chance for an escape, I at length composed myself, lay down with most of my clothes on, and slept tolerably well a great part of the night, expecting my friends to take me home the next day.

Monday, June 25th. I rose early in the morning, and took some breakfast.—then regulated some papers, which I had in my hat, and made a memorandum for my cellar stone work. About 10 o'clock, Doct. Chaplain came to my room, and found me sitting by my iron grated window perfectly calm and rational with my hat on. He stopped but few minutes—in-

quired for the memorandum for my cellar, which I gave him. I was tolerably quiet through the day, for I was in constant expectation of seeing my wife and friends as I left home with the promise that they should come and stay with me. When night came on, I began to grow uneasy—felt anxious about my wife and children, and knocked on the door. The ringing of bells, the doors grating on their hinges, and the groans of the distressed—all combined to shed an air of gloom over my apartment. I did not sleep so soundly this night.

Tuesday, June 26th. I became still more impatient, and anxious about my friends and for my liberty. I knocked on the door, and inquired for them, but could receive no satisfactory answer. I was desirous that my wife should come and stay with me. Mr. Tyler told me I must get leave of the Directors. In the afternoon, Mr. George Bond, one of the Directors visited me, I asked him if my wife might be permitted to stay with me. He inquired if I wanted her all the time: I told him, yes. He gave a rather evasive answer, but I understood him to assent. After he had gone, I asked Mr. Tyler to permit my wife to come and see me. He told me he did not understand Mr. Bond to consent to it. I found they were deceiving me; I lost all confidence in them and became disheartened. I then made much noise by pleading for deliverance and knocking on the door, but obtained no relief. At night, Mr. Tyler with three other gentlemen came to my door and ordered me out of my room, giving me no explanation of their conduct. I refused to go, and in order to prevent my removal, I took up a table, which was standing in my room, and flung towards them: it fell on the floor and broke one leg. They then seized

me, and carried me through a long dark entry into a dark room or inner prison, where they laid me on a bed and literally robbed me. They took from me my pocket book and notes, my money, gold watch, knife, rule, pencil and hair comb. When they had got every thing, they left me to my own reflections. I could hardly tell what it all meant. But a few days before I was engaged in an active employment—enjoying the blessings of freedom, and the comforts of my family. I was now confined within the walls of a dark gloomy prison: my property was taken from me: I had no friend to relieve and comfort me: I felt myself shut out from the world—fears and “thick coming fancies” crowded on me: I shuddered to think of my family deprived of their natural protector. I was troubled with a thousand fearful apprehensions in my gloomy abode; my blood boiled within me; I could not bear the indignities that had been heaped upon me, and in my wrath, I cried to God for vengeance on my enemies. In this situation, my imagination became disordered, and my miserable condition became still more pitiable by the horrible visions, that flit across my mind. For eight or ten days, I walked around my straightened abode, crying and praying to God for deliverance. In Him I trusted, and through his goodness, I have been relieved. All this time, I was kept alone, and my torments were excessive; my tongue was parched with heat and thirst; I asked for water to quench my thirst, but it was refused: I became emaciated, having lost in the course of ten or twelve days fifty pounds of my flesh. I at length became so much reduced and exhausted, that I could hardly walk—nature had almost spent her strength. My troubles,

which at first were so intense, I began to regard with more composure. I found I must endure them, and therefore determined to fortify myself. I at length became calm, and felt willing to meet the fate that awaited me.

After I had been in confinement about a week, Mr. George Hallet, another of the Directors of the Hospital came to see me. I requested him to permit my father in law, Mr. Manson, to come and stay with me. He told me he would go after him and send him over. He went away, and did not fulfil his engagement.

After I had become more reconciled to my situation, I was permitted to go into an adjoining room and sit by the grates on the window seat. I understood that some persons had been kept in the Hospital from 3 to 14 years. and was told that I must be easy in order to ever regain my liberty. I therefore found that an apparent contentment with my situation would be the most effectual means to obtain my discharge. About the 10th of July, I was permitted to go into the Hall, and converse with persons there. This gave me satisfaction. It seemed like a return from banishment. I was soon after permitted to walk out with Mr. Dearborn ; during this time I was planning for my escape.—On the 12th of July—I went into the Bowling Alley to roll ball. While my keepers' eyes were turned from me, I escaped through a window, jumped over the board fence, and out of the Garden, and got on board a schooner, lying at the wood wharf. I called on those on board and about the wharf to protect me. I told them how I was taken and dragged into that prison—and offered them half my property to deliver me. All my entreaties did no good ;—they stood like ghosts star-

ing at me. I was soon seized by Tyler and Prescott, and remanded to prison. I felt, however, some satisfaction in having expressed my opinion of my imprisonment so publicly, hoping that in some way or other, it might lead to my discharge.

July 13th. I was much gratified to day by a visit from my wife and her father. They found me sitting calmly by my window. I requested Mr. Tyler to retire while they were present with me. He did so. I supposed they had come to take me away. They stopped only about 20 minutes. I told them of my miserable situation and expressed great consolation from hearing from my children and friends. When they had gone, Mr. Tyler said I should not see them alone again.

July 17th. I took my old room, where I was first confined, and on the next day, received a pen, ink and paper for the first time.

July 20th. I wrote a letter to my wife stating the cause of my excitement, and requesting to be removed home. The next day, I wrote to my clerk respecting some business, and ordering certain debts to be secured.

July 21st, Doct. Hayden called on me and stayed a few minutes. I expressed to him my desire to go home, and told him the cause of my excitement and rage during the early part of my imprisonment. He seemed impatient to hear me, and retired by saying, that I had a good place and had better stay where I was. In the afternoon, I rode out for the first time to Medford with Mr. Tyler, which was very agreeable to me.

July 25th, I rode out again to Medford, and returned through old Cambridge. I wrote another letter to my wife, telling her of my unhappy situation,

and that I needed only to be restored to my family—I entreated her to intercede for my relief, for I was afraid I should sink into melancholy and be ruined forever.

July 28th. I wrote to my clerk ordering certain debts to be secured, and directing the management of my business—in the course of the day, received a visit from Doct. Willard of Charlestown. On the 30th of July, I rode to Cambridge, and the next day, to Medford. I also wrote a letter to Dea. Farwell requesting him to obtain my liberty.

August 2d, I walked in the garden and on the rail road—rested better at night—I told Mr. Dearborn, who accompanied me, that I was unhappy and wanted my liberty. The thought of my confinement and separation from my friends made me weep bitterly. He appeared to sympathize with me, and told me if I was not set at liberty in 30 days, he would do it himself. I had the most implicit confidence in this promise—it cheered and revived my spirits. I afterwards slept much better, and gained strength very fast.

August 4th, I again rode to Medford and old Cambridge—Dea. Farwell made me a short visit of about 30 minutes. I again renewed to him my request for liberty, but it was of no avail—I wrote to Mr. Manson about my condition—told him it was wrong to confine me, and that my physician had never understood my case. From this time, I could get no paper till the 21st of August, although I frequently requested it.

August 6th, I rode to old Cambridge—7th, walked out twice, and rested well—12th, rode with Mr. Rufus Wyman to Charlestown—11th, walked out—12th, attended meeting at Charlestown at Mr. Walker's,

which gave me great pleasure—13th, Doct Chaplin visited me, and on the same day, had a pleasant ride with Mr. Wyman to Waltham—14th, walked out—15th, rode to West Cambridge and Watertown with Doct. Chaplin—17th, rode with him again to West Cambridge and Medford—18th, rode to West Cambridge—19th, kept in all day—20th, Doct. Walker told me I must not eat any meat for three months, or go a journey—21st, Dea. Farwell called on me—22d, rode to Brookline—23d, walked out; 24th, wrote a letter to my mother telling her of my situation—also another to my clerk on business, and a third one to Dea. Farwell—all of which I gave to Hon. Edward Tuckerman, who very kindly put them into the Post Office that night—25th, rode to Medford—26th, wrote to Doct. Walker, telling him that he did me great injustice—that he had wholly mistaken my case—and that I should rather eat the crumbs, that fell from his table, and be his door keeper, than be shut up in my prison-house any longer.

August 28th. I shall always remember this day with gratitude—it was the day of my emancipation. Dea. Farwell kindly took me to his own house. I rode to Newton this day and stayed two nights—30th, went to Haverhill and Lowell—and on Saturday, Sept. 1st, arrived at my house, in the bosom of my dear family, once more to enjoy my liberty, and freed from the shackles of a tyrannical Institution. To a kind Providence, I am grateful for my deliverance, and for my continued good health.

I have thus given an account of the principal transactions relating to my seizure and confinement. I have stated them fully, truly and impartially, and wish the public to judge whether I was treated with kindness and humanity. Having now regained my

liberty, I look back with surprise at the infatuation of those men, who were instrumental in confining me. I am sure they will endeavour to justify themselves on the ground of my insanity. But does my previous conduct prove me insane? Did I not manage my business with my usual discretion? Did I not offer to stay in my own house till they were satisfied, if it was thought necessary? Why then should I be carried off and immured in a dungeon, when I could have been provided for in my own house?

To me, Eaton acted the part of a Judas. While I was at Dorchester with Mr. Clapp, he went to Cambridge, and told my wife and several others that I was going to Boston the next day to do "lots of business"; that I must be taken care of, and must not see day light again in Cambridge. He betrayed me in my speculation. He was one of the originators and most active promoters of this conspiracy. Had he given me his views of the subject, I should have treated them with respect. By his calumnies and false statements, he set my whole neighbourhood on fire—my persecutors were ready to pounce upon their victim. May he be rewarded according to his deeds and deserts!

It will be said that I raged during the 8 or 10 days of my imprisonment. This is true, and who could suffer as I did, and not rage? Who could he torn from his family, leaving his wife and children in tears, and be cast into prison, and not give evidence of his agonies? I hope no man has a heart so hard as to be so insensible to the distress of his family. I make no pretensions to such a character, and I trust in God that I shall never be deaf to the cries of distress, nor insensible of the claims of those, whom I am bound to protect. No man, whose heart is un-

corrupt, could meditate on the scenes, which I witnessed at my house on the day of my seizure, and not make his prison walls resound with lamentation and woe. Had I been permitted to remain in my own house as I requested, and as I might have done with perfect safety, as all who know me, will now acknowledge, nonewould have heard the wailing, or seen the raging, of which I in prison had the weakness to be guilty. Those, who have wronged me, may God in his infinite mercy pardon ! I shall harbour no enmity towards them. My sincere and most fervent prayer is, that from this evil, good may come : that it may prevent others from falling a sacrifice to the weakness of their neighbours, and give to all that wisdom, which shall lead them in the path of virtue, peace and happiness.

R E M A R K S

ON THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF THE M'LEAN
ASYLUM FOR THE INSANE.

The best index of the freedom of a government is the protection it affords to personal liberty. Let a government assume what name it will, unless it affords such protection, there is no freedom. We boast much of our freedom, and of the protection, which the law affords. So careful is our law of the freedom of the citizens, that every man charged with a criminal offence is entitled to a hearing before a jury of his country. Yet there is this seeming anomaly—a man charged with insanity can be taken away without trial, and shut up within the walls of a prison. No matter how rational he may be, nor how important a station he holds, if his acquaintance and neighbours are so insane or malicious, as to raise the

alarm, he has no remedy. He is seized and forced away, and when this very act produces those effects, which before existed only in their disordered imaginations, as it almost always will—they set it up as a justification of their conduct, and pride themselves on their wonderful knowledge of coming events. How often this right of seizing and confining persons on the plea of insanity is abused, I do not pretend to say. I have no doubt that it is often abused, and sometimes grossly abused. At any rate, such a right ought not to exist—it endangers the liberty of the citizen. On this plea, parents can easily imprison their children, and children their parents. On the charge of insanity, many a rich father can shut up his disorderly or idiot child ; he pays liberally for his imprisonment, and the public are none the wiser for it. It is time for the Legislature to remedy the evil. The Constitution declares, that no subject shall be arrested, imprisoned, despoiled or deprived of his property, immunities, or privileges, put out of the protection of the law, exiled or deprived of his life, liberty or estate, but by the judgment of his peers, or the law of the land. This is the language of the Bill of Rights, and it is the duty of the Legislature to see that it does not become a dead letter. It breathes the spirit of true liberty : it declares the natural rights of man ; it holds out to him, in form at least, perfect protection. Let it then not be disregarded and violated ; let not any man, or any number of men be permitted to imprison one of their fellow men on the mere suspicion of insanity.

The McLean Asylum for the Insane possesses a large share of popular favour. Its character is not known. The public are ignorant of its inmates, its rules and regulations. Its location is pleasant, and

its outward appearance delightful—and on that account more than from any other cause, it has acquired its present popularity. My experience compels me to compare it to “the whited sepulchre.”—’T’o the passing stranger, it excites no other emotions than those of beauty, comfort, benevolence and joy. Every thing looks happy : he rejoices that unfortunate men have such an abode : he applauds the spirit of a community, which had reared such a noble edifice, devoted to so benevolent and generous an object. But let him go with me within its walls : let him hear the groans of the distressed : let him see its inmates shut up with bars and bolts : let him see how deserted they are : how they are neglected and cruelly treated ; how unfit so lonely an abode is for the disconsolate and melancholy—and his views of that Institution will change. Let him then learn how persons are seized and brought there ; what a system of deception is then practised—how the money of the rich is extorted from them, and he would exclaim with wonder that a highly cultivated and liberal community would submit to it, or would allow an almost Spanish Inquisition to exist within its borders.

My own experience enables me to speak of its regulations and management. No matter how sick a person is, he is shut up alone and left entirely to himself. No kind friend is allowed to come and comfort him, or to relieve him. All must be aware that to a sick man, such a situation is dangerous.—Many, I have no doubt, who would be relieved by the pleasant conversation and society of their friends, are by their lonely situation thrown into a state of melancholy from which they never recover. I think I know of instances of this description. Had my

friends been permitted to see me, and converse with me freely, it would have been to me the greatest alleviation of my troubles ; it would have been to me a healing balm ; it would have rolled back the tide of sorrow, which almost overwhelmed me ; and would have entirely relieved me and restored me to my own home. Different persons would undoubtedly be differently affected, but there can be no doubt that many would be relieved, and some saved from utter despondency by the society of their friends. The whole community is interested in this subject. We know not who shall be so unfortunate as to be carried there. Where is the kind parent, that would permit his unfortunate child to be thus imprisoned in solitude, and he too deprived of the pleasure of administering him comfort ? Or where is the affectionate child, that would not break open the prison doors to relieve a sick parent doomed to such neglect ?

Another bad feature in the government of this Institution is the constant deception practised there. Falsehood or deception may satisfy an insane man, but it only goads the spirit, and inflames the passions of a rational one. I was told that my friends might come and see me, yet when they called, as they did almost every day, they were told that I should be injured by their visits. Even the worthy Director, as I have before mentioned, did not keep his word, but adopted the same course of deception, so prevalent to the whole institution. I soon lost all confidence in them : I could place no reliance on what was told me : my fears and jealousy were excited ; I felt without friends, and deprived of the sympathies of all mankind.

This Institution has the character of being be-

nevolent. As a specimen of its benevolence, I will present a copy of my bill :—

F. M. Esq. to the Mass. Gen. Hospital, - - Dr.
1832.

To the board of Robert Fuller at the McLean Asylum for the Insane, from June 24, to August 27, inclusively, 9 2-7 weeks, at \$15 per week,
\$139,21

To 3 5-7 weeks board for *having been removed before the expiration of the 13 weeks and at the request of his friends*, - - - 55,72
Sundries, - - - - - 4,45

Charlestown, Aug. 21, 1833. \$199,45

Rec'd. payment,

Rufus Wyman, Jr.

Clerk McL. A. I.

This amount I paid for being unjustly and unnecessarily imprisoned against my wishes—for having my feelings trifled with, and my life put in jeopardy. I ask the public to examine this bill. Was there ever such an instance of gross extortion? The officers of that institution objected to my discharge, and had I not been favoured by the kindness of Providence, I should have been confined there now. After I had been there above nine weeks, and the day before I was discharged, Doct. Walker told my friends that I was not so well—and because they took me away against *his will*, I was charged \$55,72 damages, beside the enormous sum of \$15 per week for board while there. An institution, that adopts such methods to extort money from the rich, is unworthy the patronage of the public : nay, it deserves the most decided reprobation. I know not why Dr. Walker was so desirous to keep me there ; I am satisfied, however,

that he knew nothing of my case. When he first saw me and felt of my pulse, he had no means of judging—for I had then just been seized, and was under the influence of the alarm, which it produced. I know not his motives ; I am willing to charge them to the account of ignorance.

I was charged in my bill for one quarter's board. I suppose this to be a rule of the institution. I ask the public to look at it. Every person, who is seized on suspicion of insanity, and confined there, must stay his three months, whether well or sick, to satisfy the ravenous maw of this monster. Once get within its walls, and you may stay there through life, if you have money to pay for it. Insanity is not a requisite to become a tenant; but money is necessary to remain so. There was a strong desire to keep me there, and it was only at the earnest solicitation of my friends, that I was permitted to go home. I was made a victim to their arbitrary laws, which are so oppressive, that even some servants cannot be obtained but for a short time to live under them. How hard they bear upon the poor tenants, the public can well judge, when they see that free help can hardly be obtained. Any institution, governed by such secret and arbitrary laws, ought to excite not the jealousy only, but the fears of the whole community.

I am aware that it will be said that my friends sent me to this Asylum, and therefore, I ought to be satisfied. This is always the plea. No man is ever sent there except by persons, who call themselves his friends. That Judas, Eaton, under the mask of friendship, inflamed the whole neighbourhood, and induced them to pounce upon me. It was his treachery and hypocrisy, that set my persecutors in motion. With the name of friend, Hemmenway has

acted his unworthy and inglorious part by stating falsehoods respecting my business, which led to my troubles. He has taken the name of friend only as a mask to conceal the treachery, malice and corruption of his heart. The mask is too thin: the animal appears beneath it: let him throw it off and take his right name, and the viper sting shall be plunged into the breast of its possessor. All, who took a part in this melancholy tragedy, did it under the guise of friendship. But it was such friendship as the wolf bears to the lamb: a friendship, that devours and consumes: yea, whose spirit would lead to cruelty, universal anarchy and death. God deliver me and my family from such friends! I should rather follow them to their graves than to see them seized and imprisoned as I have been, by heartless, treacherous and false friends. No institution can be justified in the imprisonment of a person upon such a charge, and without any examination into its truth.

We are told that this institution is a safe place for the insane. In one sense it is so. It keeps them in confinement, and tends to put an end to their existence. It is safe in the same sense, that the grave is safe: it takes them from their friends: it shuts them from the world, and hastens them to their final doom. How safe it is in the proper sense of the term, the public must judge, when they are told that the inmates are kept alone, where they can injure themselves, or put an end to their existence, as is often the case—that they are not allowed to see their friends—that they are used with all manner of neglect—that they are deceived—that they are not allowed to go into the open air, except in the middle of the day, when the heat is intolerable, and that to deception, is added frequent provocation.

There is no place in the world, where there is less of that safety, which contributes to health and happiness, or greater danger of that influence, which leads to hopelessness and despair.

If the number of inmates of that Institution is a true index of the number of insane, the increase of this disease since its establishment, leads to melancholy reflections. Insanity was once a rare occurrence; the community did not feel the want of such an asylum, and but few were considered the proper subjects of such a place. Insanity is no longer rare: the Asylum is open to receive all, whom any persons may think the proper subjects. Mere suspicion or malice is enough to fix on any one the charge of insanity. Witches were never convicted with less testimony than the insane now are. An Asylum, prepared for the insane alone, is made the common receptacle of the sick, insane, idiotic and suspicious. Instead of happiness, it gives distress: instead of health, sickness: instead of life, death: and instead of being an instrument of benevolence, it is made an instrument of extortion.

I have thus expressed my views freely of my imprisonment, and of the character of the McLean Asylum for the Insane. I have done it with the purest motives;—for the vindication of my own character, and for the promotion of the public good. I could not rest in peace till I had exposed the spirit and conduct of my persecutors—till I had warned the public of their danger; till I had informed them, that a worse than Spanish Inquisition was growing up among them, where not only the rights of men are trampled upon, but the claims of humanity are disregarded. I call on the public to remedy these evils, while it is in their power, and I entreat the Legis-

lature to enact such laws as shall be necessary to protect the citizens, and promote the happiness of the whole people. The question before the public is, whether we shall live as freemen, or whether we shall pass through life in bondage through fear of being seized and shut up in insane hospitals. While this state of things exists, there is no protection; we can bid farewell to liberty.—We must guard ourselves in our own houses. The liberty which we have enjoyed, and which the half finished monument on Bunker Hill was intended to commemorate, has vanished.—Let that monument be torn from its base,—we are no longer worthy of it. Is there a man in the community, that will send a friend to an institution, which is secret in all its management, and where he cannot see him, and converse with him, when and as long as he pleases. Well may such a place excite our fears and jealousy. Every secret institution, of whatever name or character, is dangerous to the community. I trust no man will aid in building up an institution, either from a mistaken benevolence, or what is worse, from the base hope of immortalizing his name, which is made such an instrument of sorrow, and which exists in part by the deprivations and sufferings of innocent and rational men. I do not deny that some, who are sent to this asylum, obtain relief, yet I am well satisfied that a greater number are injured, that some are sacrificed to their arbitrary laws, and die through gross neglect, and by reason of solitude—and that of all, who go there, a vast majority would obtain relief in half the time, if permitted to stay with their friends; and that if this system continues, thousands must be made victims to its secret and arbitrary rules. The doctrine is too popular, that an insane person must be kept from his

friends, but at what time, does he stand in greater need of friendship, or feel more in want of their aid and consolations? After awhile, I was permitted to converse with the sick and the insane in prison, yet I was not allowed to see my friends. How inconsistent and absurd! As though it would be less injurious to converse with a fellow prisoner than with a dear friend! I know that if this subject be properly understood, there is a moral power in this community, that will raise up a host in support of my cause; that will cover my persecutors with their merited infamy; that will reform and purify this Asylum—and make it no longer the abode of the persecuted, doomed to neglect and privation, but what its name imports, a place of safety and happiness for that unfortunate class of human beings, deprived of their reason.

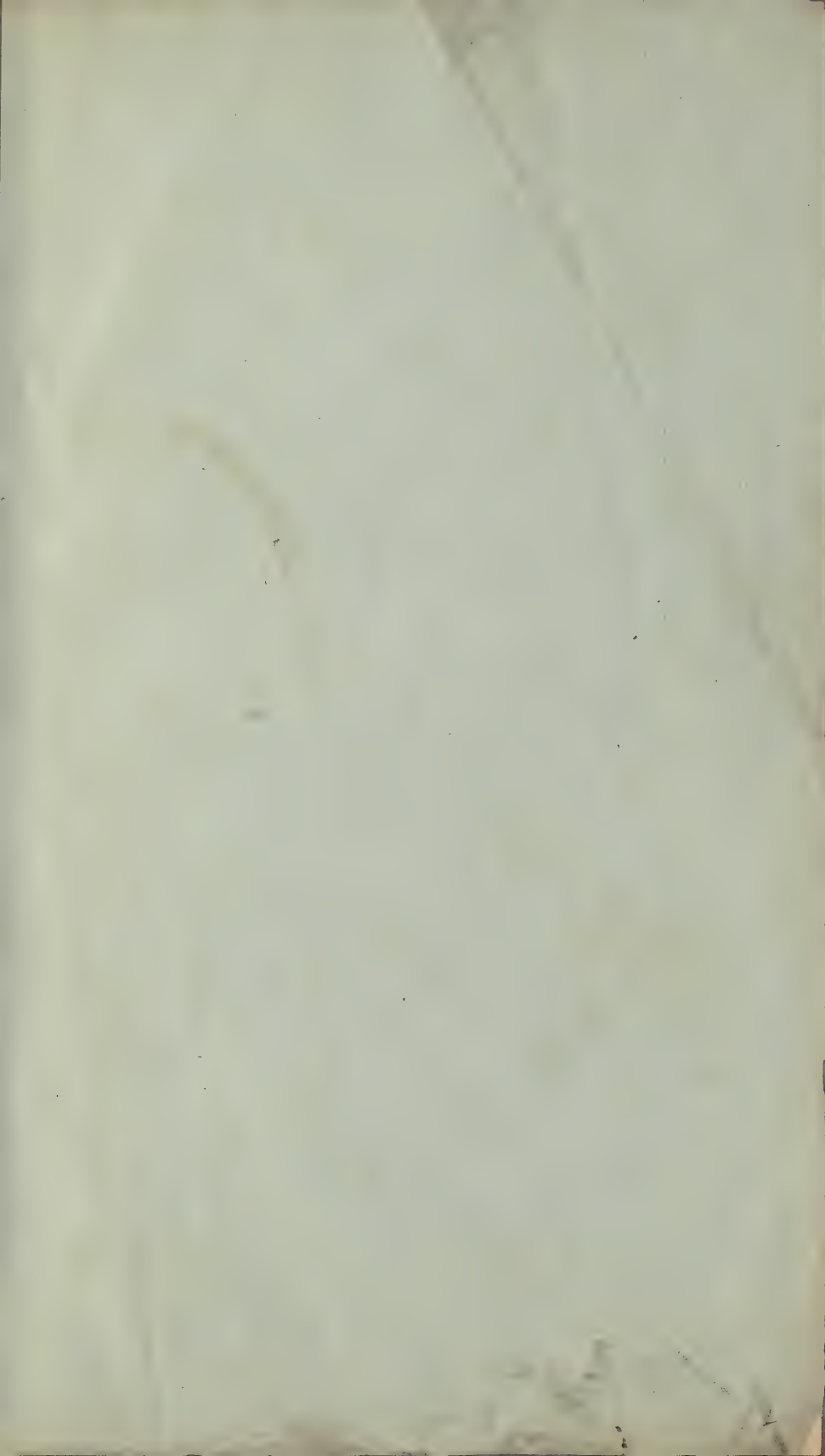
I have thus given an account of my imprisonment and but a faint description of my sufferings. I could not close my eyes in peace on the scenes of this life, without declaring the truth and warning the public of their danger. If my warnings are heard, and the dangers are removed, my sufferings will not have been in vain. It is my most fervent prayer to God, that none of my fellow men may ever fall into the snares of treacherous friends, or suffer the dreadful consequences of an unjust and cruel imprisonment in the M'Lean Asylum for the Insane.

ROBERT FULLER.

Cambridge, June 10, 1833.









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